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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000072

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: REO/PRT MAKE OFFICE CALL TO DOWNTOWN BASRA

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Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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[¶1.](#) (SBU) SUMMARY: Signaling an improved security environment, REO personnel visited downtown Basra for the first time in more than a year. The visit to the Governor's office also sought to showcase the implementation of two USAID programs. The REO emphasized US support for the Iraqi Army and government, attempting to express support for the institution of the governorship while minimizing the perception of U.S. support for the governor as a politician. Predictably, the Governor attempted to exploit the visit through the media for his own political benefit, while the Prime Minister's office reportedly censored coverage of the event by the state-run Al Iraqiya channel. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (U) Movement and security support from a US Marine unit and elements of the Iraqi Army's 14th Division enabled REO personnel to travel to the temporary offices of the Governor of Basra Mohammed Musabih Al Waili in downtown Basra on August 20. The US delegation consisted of REO Director, PRT Deputy Team Leader and USAID Representative in Basra. Close advisors to the governor and the Chairman of the Provincial Council were also present in the room. It was the first REO visit to downtown Basra since July 2007. The trip also included a visit to two USAID-funded school projects in the district of Hyaniyah, formerly a hotbed of militant activity.

GAPTIS and GIS presentation

[¶3.](#) (U) The ability to visit the governor's office reflects the improved security situation in Basra, which constitutes a powerful message in its own right. During the visit the Governor signed a memorandum of understanding for two USAID programs being implemented in Basra. The Governorate Accounting and Project Tracking System (GAPTIS) and the Governorate Information System (GIS) are computer-based programs that will improve the provincial government's capacity to perform a number of functions (financial tracking and more transparent accountability, urban planning, public works prioritization and management, etc.).

On message, despite media circus

[¶4.](#) (C) In press remarks the REO director thanked the Iraqi

Army, particularly the 14th Division, and local police, who, with the support of Coalition forces, have established an environment that should enable the economic reconstruction long-awaited by Basrawis. REO director added that the Iraqi government now has significant funding to carry out much of that reconstruction and that the US stands ready to provide the necessary technical expertise and assistance to help Iraqis make the most efficient use of those funds. A REO contact from the Governor's office revealed that someone from the office of the Prime Minister had censored state-run Al Iraqiya station from showing coverage of the event, an indication of the persistent tensions between Waeli and Maliki.

DG training

15. (SBU) After speaking before the press, Governor Waili and REO Director, accompanied by PRT Deputy Team Leader and USAID Rep (and more cameras), briefly attended a training session on functional analysis and budget execution given by USAID contractors to 14 Director Generals. REO director mentioned how vital their efforts are for the people of Basra.

16. (C) Comment: Knowing Governor Waili, the REO expected him to exploit the visit for his own political benefit. Nevertheless, it was surprising to walk into his office and face what seemed to be every media outlet south of Baghdad. Given that Governor Waili is such a controversial figure, the REO director worded his remarks to emphasize U.S. support for the institution of the governorship rather than Waili himself. As expected, the governor tried to make GAPTIS and GIS look like the signing of a major bilateral investment treaty. The central government was likely concerned about how Waili's statements were portrayed by the media. British Consul General Haywood and MND-SE CDR MG Salmon made a similar visit to the Governor the following day and met with the same media circus.

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End Comment.
NEGRON